



ENGAGEMENT IN SERVICE PLANNING

CONSULTATION WITH DIVERSE ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITIES IN THE NORTH AND SOUTH OF SCOTLAND

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Since 2001 BEMIS (Black and Ethnic Minorities Infrastructure in Scotland) has been addressing the under-representation of diverse Ethnic Minority Communities in rural Scotland in terms of decision-making forums at local and central government levels. Its staff have been supporting the development of rural Ethnic Minority groups. These groups are now demanding greater involvement in service planning both in relation to services.
- 1.2 To this end BEMIS has initiated a consultation with members of these communities within the north and south of Scotland on:-
- perceptions of services
 - service needs
 - attitudes to engagement in service planning.

Approach to Consultation Process

- 1.3 Members of ethnic minority groups including members of the Polish and other East European communities now living in Inverness and adjacent areas were invited to take part in a focus group in October 2007. This was followed by a second focus group in December 2007 for ethnic minority groups in Dumfries for local diverse ethnic minority communities in Dumfrieshire.
- 1.4 The focus group in Inverness was facilitated by an external consultant and the Director of National Development, coordinated by the Rural Development Officer, and involved the National BME Community Health Development Officer (REACH Community Health Project). The focus group in Dumfries was facilitated by the Director of National Development.

Both focus groups explored the following themes:

- Mapping of services which BME communities wish to engage with
- Mapping of their individual or group representation on service involvement or planning forums
- Ranking of services in terms of perceived quality
- Proposals for services that BME communities in Inverness wish to engage with.

Profile of participants

- 1.5 The focus groups were attended by a cross-section of workers and volunteers with varying cultural and religious backgrounds. Table 1 summarises the profile of participants in each focus group
- 1.6 *Dumfrieshire*
Most were community activists working on a voluntary basis providing support such as advocacy and interpreting e.g. by accompanying people to solicitors (committee chair, volunteer, members of Dumfries and Galloway International Women's group) or were employees of voluntary organisations (development officer, Polish interpreter, youth worker).

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1.7 **Highlands**

The majority were aged between 35 and 55 year olds - two retired and one under 35. All had been over 5 years in the UK and spoke English fluently. Occupations varied from taxi drivers, men in the catering industry, a private care home owner, adult education tutor, and unemployed women including a doctor taking time out to care for children. They were involved in delivering on a voluntary basis a range of services such as: Islamic education, Arabic and languages for young people, ladies educational and social activities, information services, as well as organising festivals, musical and fundraising events.

	Dumfries and Galloway	Highlands
Focus group location	Dumfries	Inverness
Total	12	13
Men : Women	5 : 7	6 : 8
Employment status	Voluntary sector workers or volunteers	Private and voluntary sector workers, retired, unemployed
Cultural backgrounds	Polish, Argentinean, Bangladeshi, Turkish, Thai, Philippines, and African	Iran, Egypt, Bangladesh, India, and Morocco
Religious background	Hinduism, Islam, Christian faiths	Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism, and Baha'i

Table 1: profile of focus group participants

2 ISSUES

2.1 Participants were invited to identify the main services which were important to them and in which they would like to have a say in terms of design of services. They were asked which services they were involved with in terms of ongoing consultation or decision-making forums or structures. They were then asked to comment on and to rank the quality of services and finally they were asked to come forward with proposals on how they would like to be involved in having an input to service delivery and what kinds of improvements would they wish to see being implemented.

2.2 **Health Services** were the first set of services identified by both focus group participants as being important to them and in which they would like to have a say in terms of design of services. Within these services those specifically mentioned were:

- **General practitioners** - Registering with a doctor because of language difficulties both for existing and recent migrant communities from Eastern Europe
- **Dental services** - Registering with a dental practice - five polish dentists have recently set up services in Dumfreishshire to meet needs of the polish community there.
- **Hospitals** – Low level of cultural and diversity awareness among staff - do not provide consent forms in different languages; waiting lists are too long, and length of waiting times for appointments
- **Translation and interpreting services for patients** - lack of translated material or sign posting to interpreting support.

- *Services for people with diabetes* – lack of adequate information

2.3 **Local Authority Services** were the second set of services identified by both focus group participants. Within these services those specifically mentioned were:

- **Housing** - Length of Council and Housing Association waiting lists for those in overcrowded accommodation in both Dumfries and Inverness; housing standards in the private sector are poor e.g. dampness and lack of heating facilities reported by the Polish community in Dumfriesshire where some families are living in caravans.
- **Education** - In both Dumfries and Inverness there is a lack of ESOL classes for non English speaking adults, and inadequate one to one language skills support for children.
 - “There are not enough children that come from different nationalities, and only two people can translate for them; it should be one to one support, it is essential for family and child; there is a shortage of people working in a huge area with lots of immigrants.” (Inverness)
 - “Most people go to the Multicultural Association to access ESOL classes. There is very little other support available for people who wish to learn English, and there is no information available for people or signposting as to where they can access these services.” (Dumfries)
- **Education (bullying and racism in schools)** - in both Inverness and Dumfriesshire – there was felt to be lack of understanding of people’s cultures and faiths; parents felt there is mental, physical and psychological racism as well as bullying related racism within schools. For example racist comments are often made to pupils and to parents when they come to pick up their children:
 - “Your mother is black and why are you white...you can often hear name calling such as ‘spastics’.” “Schools don’t appear to take any action when parents make complaints. There is a ‘cover up’ by not logging complaints as bullying incidents rather than racist incidents contrary to the education department’s equality policies. Head teachers don’t want to give their schools or areas a bad name. Teachers as part of their teachers training should be trained in discrimination and anti-aggression.” Dumfries
 - “Even though there is the year of culture in schools, they say it’s OK for you to have any type of food for lunch, but if your child takes anything different they are picked on and that’s where the problem starts. It shouldn’t be up to the children to educate other children. It should be responsibility of the authorities to highlight different cultures.” “Racism is a big issue. Racism is inside, a smoke screen.” (Inverness)
- **Environmental Health (Burial Facilities)** - There is a failure to take account of religious requirements. The Islamic Society in Dumfries and Muslim community in Inverness organise burial provision in conjunction with hospital services. It is felt that hospitals and the council should provide information to the general public and to community organisations on this.
 - “The Muslim community is concerned about the burial arrangements as each religious group has its own requirements; there are no culturally sensitive

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services; it doesn't mean where there are less people support is not needed".
(Inverness)

- ***Environmental health (Water Quality)*** –
“The department is slow in rectifying problems. For example, and there was a five week delay from providing evidence of black objects in the drinking water from the main water supply to the supply of clean water.” (Dumfries)
- ***Planning*** - particular case in Inverness of planning consent which had gone as far as the Scottish Government and was felt to be an example of discrimination against an ethnic minority business man.

2.4 **Central government services** were the third set of services identified by both focus groups. Within these services those specifically mentioned were:

- ***Local prison services*** - Participants felt there is both internal and external discrimination within the prison services, for example there is no proper observation of dietary requirements during the Ramadan or recognition of the need for visits by members of religious communities during religious festivals; there is no engagement of ethnic minority communities or faith groups on its board.
- ***Police*** - Although considered by some participants in Dumfries as friendly and helpful and quick to respond to some complaints, other participants reported that they don't log complaints about racist remarks or take action; there is also lack of awareness of different cultures, and indirect discrimination by not providing interpreters.

2.5 **Other Services** highlighted were:

- ***Public Transport*** - is a major problem in both the Highlands and Dumfreisshire particularly for young people wanting to attend social and educational activities because of inadequate or irregular public bus services.
“The transport is expensive and not punctual, and at some times there are no services at all, which limits the ability of youth to take part in activities. It is very difficult therefore for young people to travel around and so they tend to hang around certain areas. Some of the local railway stations have been taken away and replaced by houses;” (Dumfries)
“Public transport in Inverness is pretty poor. There would have been more people today if it hadn't been for the poor transport.” (Inverness)
- ***Employment Support Services*** were of concern in Dumfreisshire - Their experience is that the employment policies of both Dumfries and Galloway Council and other agencies are poor; people feel discriminated against on the grounds of their foreign names when seeking work, and they feel treated differently from their white counterparts when in work.

2.6 ***Voluntary Sector Services*** were not prioritised by focus group participants as services which they wanted to engage with. Members were unaware of or did not have any

dealings with a range of voluntary sector organisations in their communities such as the Citizens Advice Bureaux, Housing Associations, Councils for Voluntary Service. Those that they were aware of they ranked poor in terms of quality. Participants found it easier to volunteer in their own communities and faith groups than in white organisations in both the voluntary and statutory sectors.

“White organisation’s agenda is different when it comes to recruiting ethnic minorities and sometimes we don’t even hear about it”.

3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

3.1 Participants were invited to identify the main services which were important to them and in which they would like to have a say in terms of design of services. Health (community and hospital based services), Education, Housing and Prison Services, were the top four service areas in both the Highlands and Dumfrieshire. Planning, Environmental Health, the Police, Transport and Employment services were also identified. The lack of interpreting provision, cultural awareness, and responses to racist incidents, were seen as evidence that these services were not addressing the needs of diverse ethnic communities resident in rural areas of Scotland.

3.2 There was evidence of frustration in terms of getting criticisms addressed and perceived lack of opportunities to engage in service decision-making. Except for one participant who was a local employer and had been previously active in local government none had direct experience of input to service delivery planning forums such as community planning, tenants associations. One reason given for this was lack of information –

“This is the first time (in relation to NHS Highland consultation on diabetes services) we received information. Whether its education or anything we get very little information from the council. I’m not aware of any one being on the school board or PTA.”

While all of the participants were involved in some way or other in different voluntary organisations and activities these were closely linked to their specific cultural and religious communities or to international groupings. There was no overlap between these groupings and formal representational structures.

3.3 As a result some participants were confused about which services were run by which agencies, such as the differences between local and central government, between Holyrood and Westminster, and also split responsibilities between transport providers and local government transport planners. This added to the challenge of getting engaged in service planning debates.

3.4 Participants were asked to identify what would help them as individuals to engage in service planning. They highlighted specific information needs which they had and without which they were not in a position to begin to engage with service planners around service improvements.

- “We don’t know where to go for support if we want to raise a concern about a particular service.
- We don’t know what authorities can do - What actions are they able to take and what are their responsibilities in relation to other agencies?

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- We don't know what can be done about specific problems – What are the options open to those planning and delivering services?"
- 3.5 A key service improvement addressed was in relation to tackling racial incidents within and outwith school. Participants felt it was the responsibility of education authorities including teachers to say what behaviour was unacceptable and to demonstrate by example. Another example was the response by Police in Inverness to racist letters which were not acted on because the threatened action hadn't happened.
- 3.6 There was concern in Inverness about creating enemies of government officials. An example was nervousness about the danger of being too assertive in making demands for a multi-cultural centre. There was also concern about reprisals. One example was of a planning application which was approved by appealing to the Scottish Government, but the conditions imposed by the local authority were felt to be excessive in retaliation for appealing.
- 3.7 The consensus in Dumfrieshire was that there is no consideration being given to new communities who are now living in the region. They are not considered as locals till they have stayed for a minimum of three years.
- 3.8 In conclusion, there was a sense that individual members of diverse ethnic minority communities had to accept on occasion what were perceived to be inadequate services and in some cases discriminatory provision of services, that it was a waste of time complaining about anything as no action would be taken.
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4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The following were recommendations on how to engage diverse ethnic minorities in decision-making and in the promotion of culturally sensitive services:
- a) Service providers should be looking at their recruitment and retention practices in relation to employment of members of diverse ethnic minority communities
 - b) Local Authorities should monitor and report on the implementation by all departments of their race equality policies.
 - c) Interpreting and translation services should be delivered by all public service providers by employment of a pool of interpreters.
 - d) Complaints procedures within education should be reviewed and discrimination and racism within schools investigated.
 - e) Local authorities and other public service agencies need to involve diverse ethnic minorities' communities in their strategic and action planning forums, school boards and other consultative forums.
 - f) A central register of services should be promoted by Local Authorities in partnership with the existing multicultural association and other groups
 - g) Promotion of information on the election process is required.
 - h) Inverness Council and other public sector partners should facilitate the establishment of a multicultural centre in Inverness.